

AGATHA CHRISTIE

THE MURDER ON THE LINKS

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FRANCE. ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF AMIENS ...



These were battlefields
in the war.

Mrs... Yes, I know. I was wounded on
the Somme. Captain Hastings at your
service, Madam!



An army officer! How exciting!
Wait 'til I tell my sister. We are
both actresses, kind of travelling
performers.

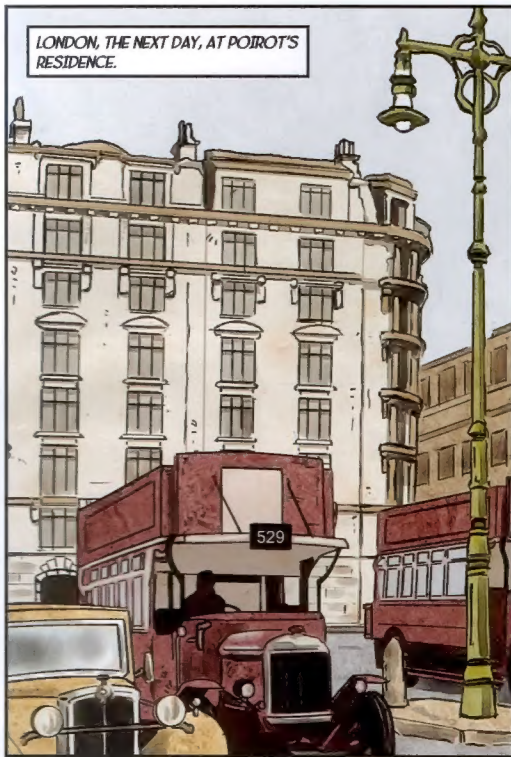


You may call me Cinderella.
I think the name rather
suits me.



Goodness me. Ha! What will my
friend Poirot say when I tell
him I met Cinderella?





LONDON, THE NEXT DAY, AT POIROT'S RESIDENCE.



You are almost on time for breakfast this morning, *mon ami*. You have recovered from the Channel crossing?

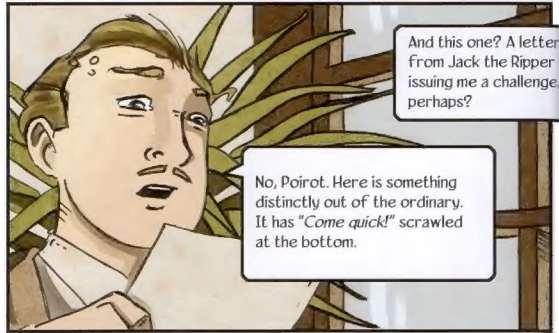


Well, I certainly wasn't seasick on such a short journey! Have you read your post?

There is nothing of interest. Only bills ... The great criminals, they no longer exist. See for yourself, *mon ami*.

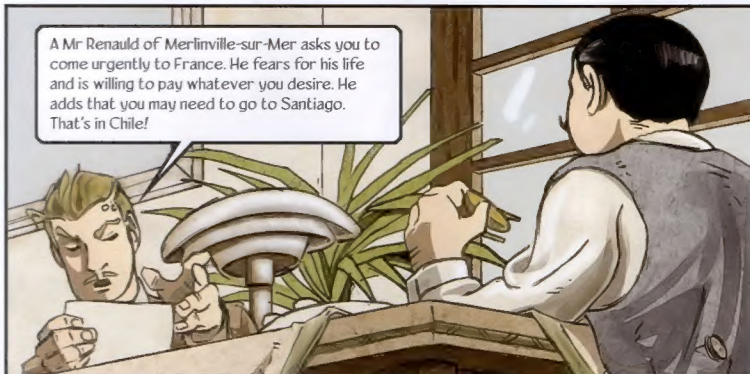


"We would be most grateful if you would come and give a talk on the art of detection to a Boy Scout troop in Reading ..."



And this one? A letter from Jack the Ripper issuing me a challenge, perhaps?

No, Poirot. Here is something distinctly out of the ordinary. It has "Come quick!" scrawled at the bottom.

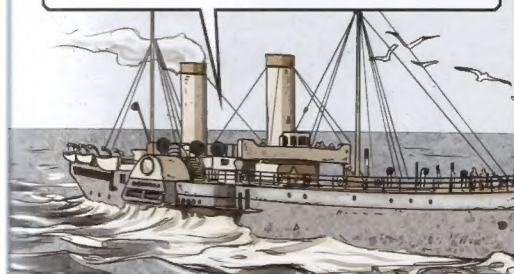


A Mr Renaud of Merlinville-sur-Mer asks you to come urgently to France. He fears for his life and is willing to pay whatever you desire. He adds that you may need to go to Santiago. That's in Chile!



There is no time to lose. Will you accompany me? Across the Channel once more, Hastings!

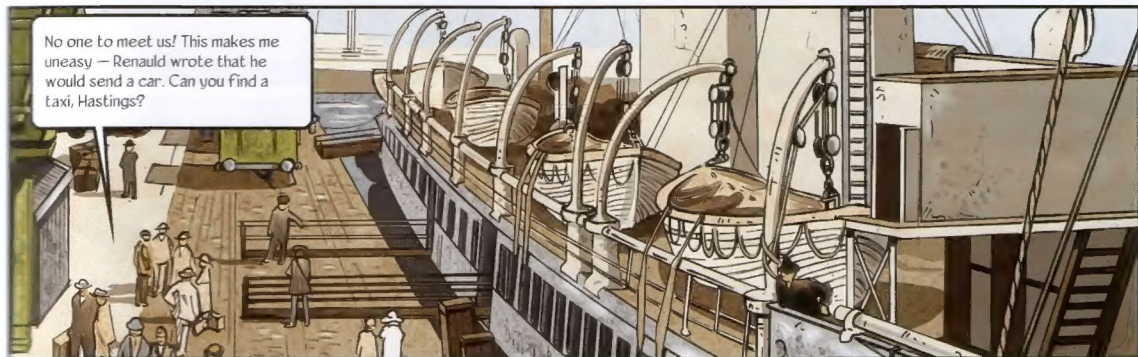
I am wondering, *mon bon ami*, if this Monsieur Renauld could be the South American millionaire of that name. But I am concerned by his postscript.



"Come quick!"? Probably a way of making sure you'd come. You know, I thought I'd heard his name before ...



No one to meet us! This makes me uneasy — Renauld wrote that he would send a car. Can you find a taxi, Hastings?



Villa Geneviève, please, driver.

I'm sorry, sir, I don't know where that is.



Then we must look for it, *mon ami*.


Villa Geneviève, mademoiselle?

It's a little further down the road, hidden behind the trees.




Mon Dieu, Hastings, the police! We are too late ...






Monsieur Poirot! My friend, your arrival is most opportune.

Inspector Bex!
What brings you here?




Monsieur Renault was murdered this morning.




But it was he who asked Poirot to come!

He foresaw his own murder? That upsets our theories considerably!

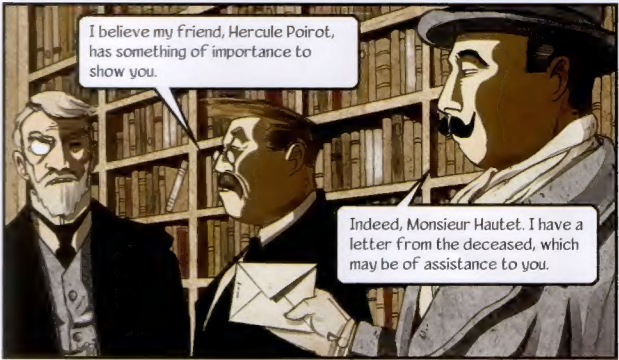


When was the murder committed?

The body was discovered early this morning.

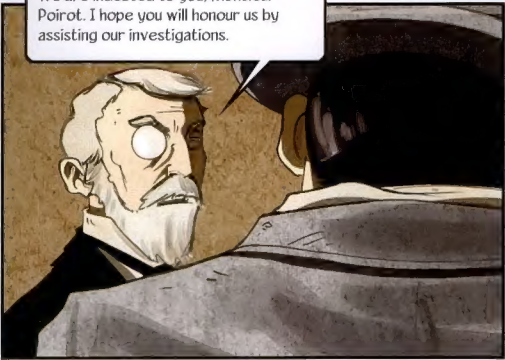


Poirot, allow me to introduce Monsieur Hautet, the examining magistrate in charge of the case ... and Dr Durand, who can confirm the time of death.



I believe my friend, Hercule Poirot, has something of importance to show you.

Indeed, Monsieur Hautet. I have a letter from the deceased, which may be of assistance to you.



We are indebted to you, Monsieur Poirot. I hope you will honour us by assisting our investigations.

'The maid discovered Madame Renauld bound and gagged ...'



Madame Renauld was freed at once by the maid, Frangoise Arrichet. Would you like to speak to her?



'Her husband's body was found later in a shallow grave ...'



Tell me, did you notice anything unusual last evening?



Please continue. Then what happened?

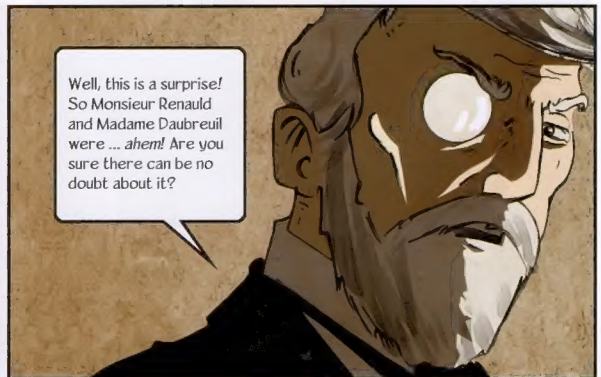
Er ... I let the lady in, like I do every evening ...



Madame Daubreuil. She's a friend of Monsieur. She lives at Villa Marguerite, down the road.



Well, this is a surprise! So Monsieur Renauld and Madame Daubreuil were ... *ahem*! Are you sure there can be no doubt about it?





Er ... Well, Monsieur was very rich and Madame Daubreuil very poor. But she was always very elegantly dressed. She lives quietly with her daughter. I think she has, what one would call, a *history*!

Indeed? And what did Madame Renauld have to say about this — friendship?



I don't think she suspected anything ... at least not in the beginning. But then she started to suffer, to grow pale. But it's not surprising when such things are going on. No reticence, no discretion!

What time did Monsieur Renauld go up to bed?



He came up ten minutes after me. I heard nothing after that. In my opinion, Monsieur, the Mafia were on his track!

Thank you, *ma fille*. You may go.



Monsieur Poirot, this is Ernest, Monsieur Renauld's valet ...

Thank you, *mon ami*. Ernest, did you let in Madame Daubreuil last evening?

Had you seen her before, Ernest?



Madame Daubreuil? No, she didn't come. A lady came here, but it was someone else.



No, Monsieur. But she spoke English ...



... and I heard Monsieur say to her as he opened the door, "Yeas, yeas — but for Gaud's saike go naww!"



Well, gentlemen, what are we to make of these two contradictory witnesses?

It was Ernest who let in the visitor. And clearly Françoise dislikes Madame Daubreuil.

A good point, Monsieur Bex. But I was forgetting ... we haven't yet told Monsieur Poirot there was yet another woman in Renauld's life!



This letter, Monsieur Poirot, was found in the dead man's pocket.



"My love, your silence frightens me ... Why have you not written for so long? If you don't love me anymore, I think I'll kill myself ... if there's another woman, you're the one I'll kill ... I love you!" It is signed "Bella". This is very intriguing, mes amis.



Renauld was involved with this English woman. He comes here, meets Madame Daubreuil and starts an affair with her. A jealous woman such as Bella could have stabbed him, but how could she have moved the body and dug the grave?

You're right. The murder was committed by a man.

The letter you received from Monsieur complicates matters ...

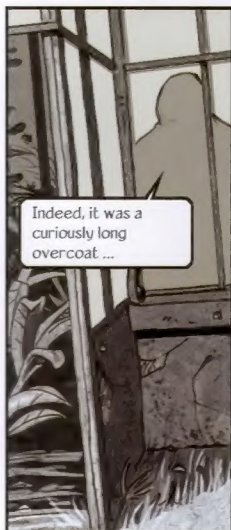


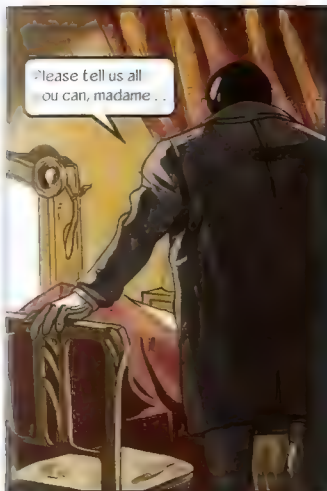
Renauld was a man of the world. He would not be likely to call upon a detective to protect him from a lovesick woman!

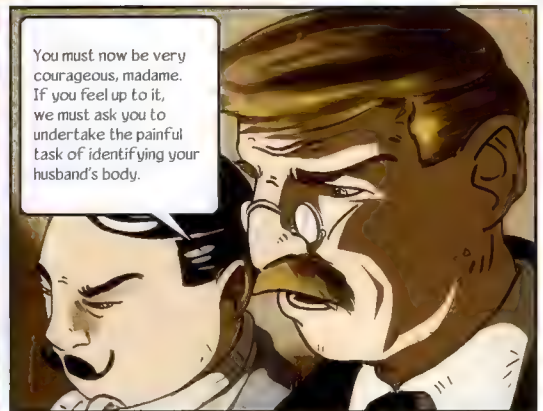
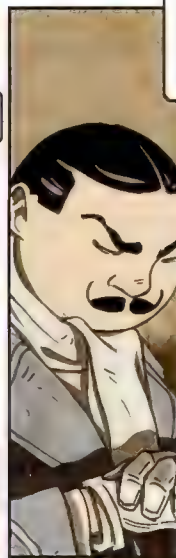


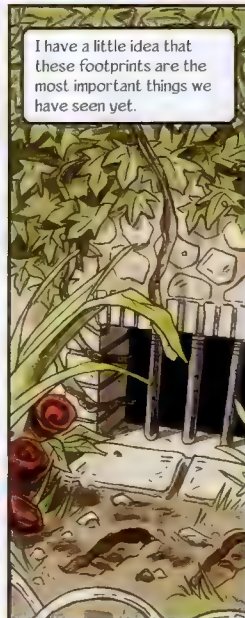
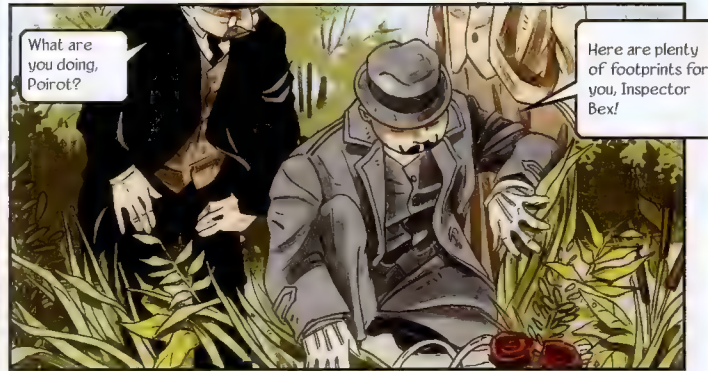
I'm sure the answer lies in Santiago. I'll cable the city's police at once!

Excellent.









Mon Dieu! My poor clothes!

It's a golf course!

The links are not completed yet. They are due to open next month

Goodness, how dreadful! Not another body ...

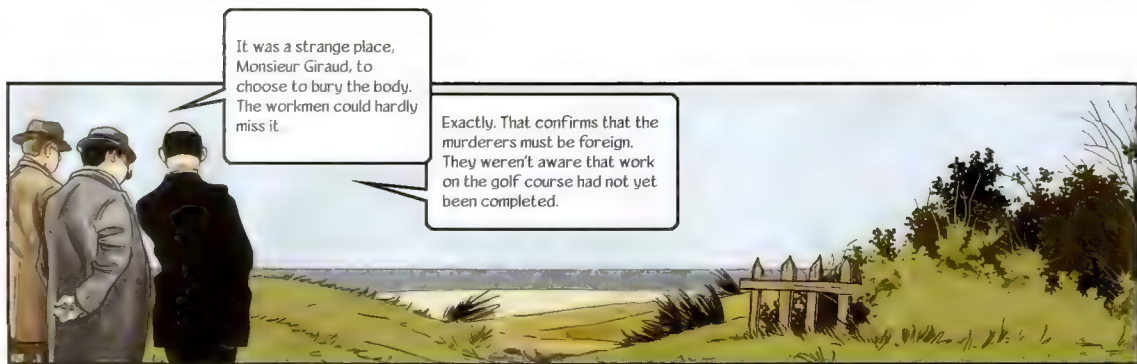
No, I know who that is. I was wondering how long it would take the Paris Sûreté to interfere!

The examining magistrate, Hautet, sent for me. Who is this?

Inspector Giraud, this is Monsieur Poirot, who needs no introduction.

Hercule Poirot? A name from the old days!





It was a strange place, Monsieur Giraud, to choose to bury the body. The workmen could hardly miss it

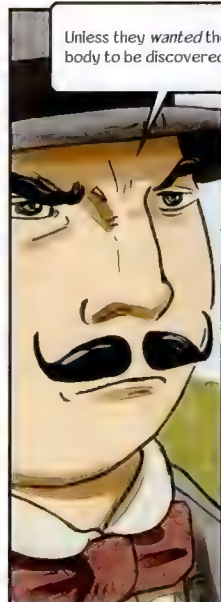
Exactly. That confirms that the murderers must be foreign. They weren't aware that work on the golf course had not yet been completed.



Well reasoned ...

If you say so, mon ami ...

He is? And what about that piece of lead pipe? Let Giraud carry on with his search ... I'm going to use my little grey cells!



Unless they wanted the body to be discovered!

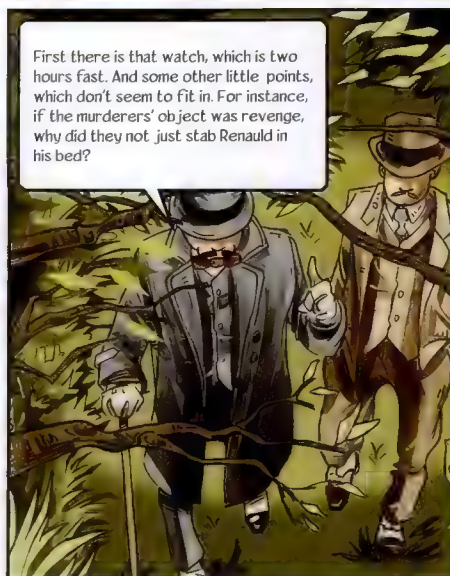


Mon cher Hastings, you have just seen at work a human foxhound.

Well at least he's doing something.



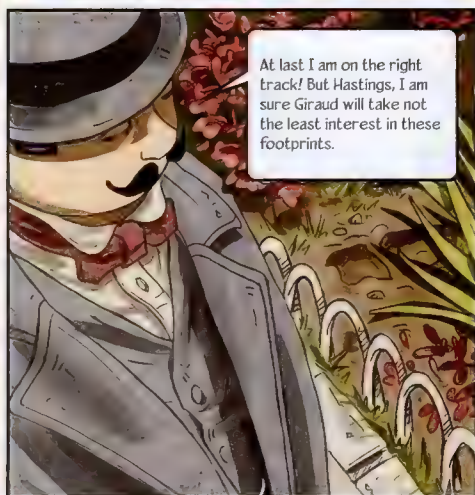
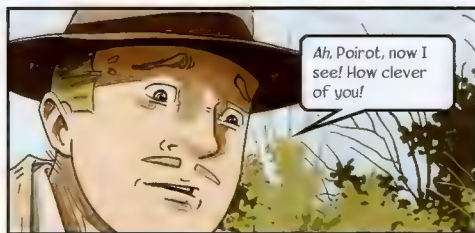
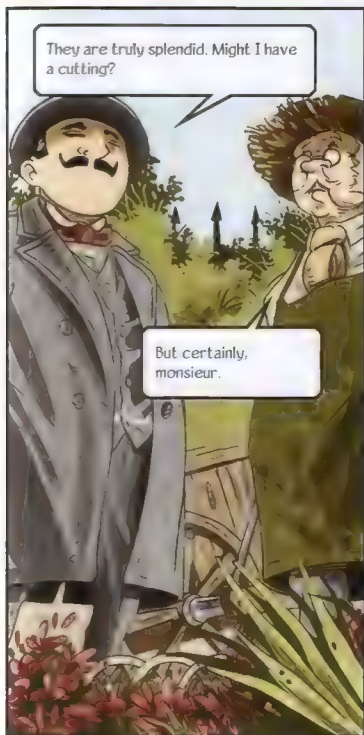
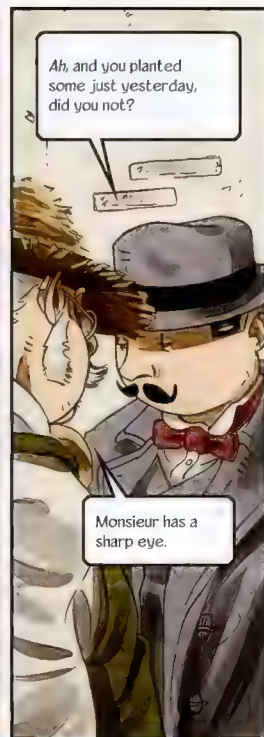
He is? And what about that piece of lead pipe? Let Giraud carry on with his search ... I'm going to use my little grey cells!



First there is that watch, which is two hours fast. And some other little points, which don't seem to fit in. For instance, if the murderers' object was revenge, why did they not just stab Renaud in his bed?



Because they wanted to know "the secret", Poirot.



LATER THAT DAY ...

This is Madame Daubreuil's villa. Apparently more than 200,000 francs have been recently deposited in her bank account.

Presumably courtesy of Monsieur Renaud ...

She is a mysterious woman. Nothing is known of her past life ...

And what of her daughter?

Such a beautiful young girl must wonder about her mother's mysterious past. Let's see if we can discover a little more of it!



We are sorry to disturb you, mademoiselle. Will it be possible to speak with your mother?

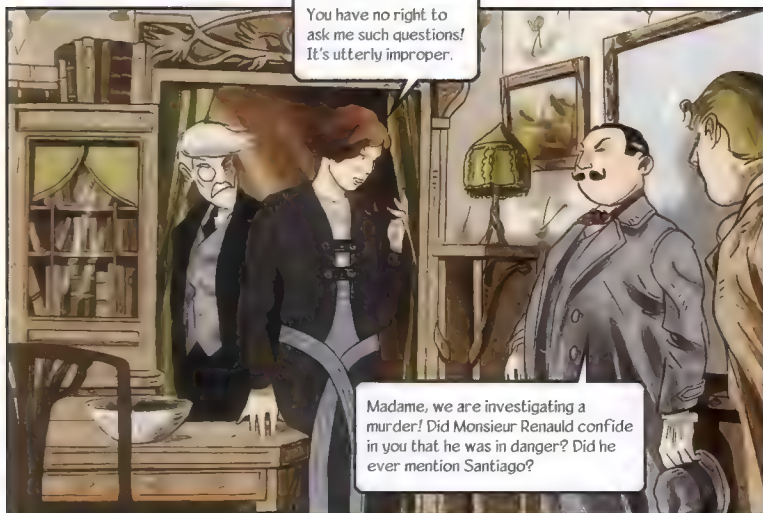
I shall fetch her. Please come in.

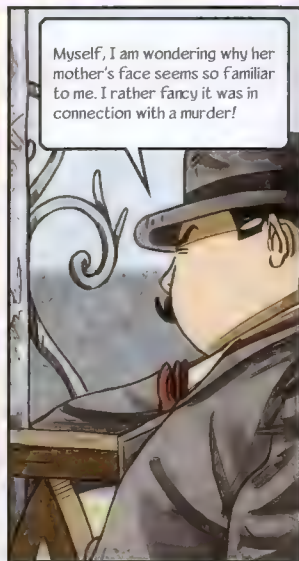


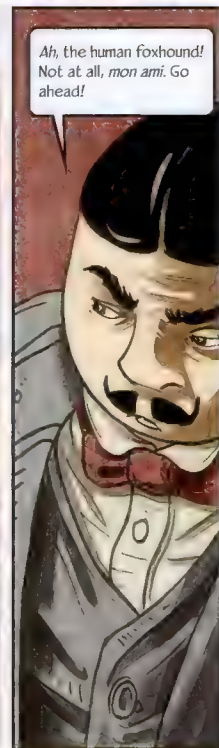
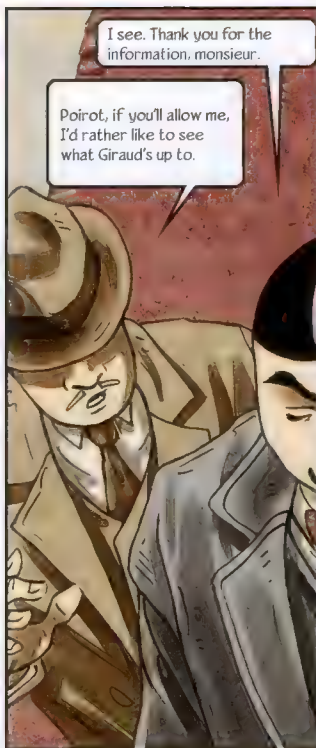
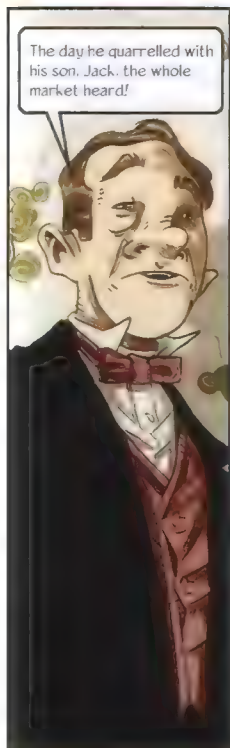
What is it you want, gentlemen?

We have come to ask whether you can throw any light on the circumstances of Monsieur Renaud's death, madame.

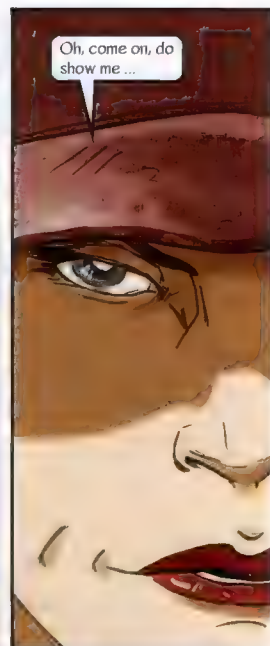


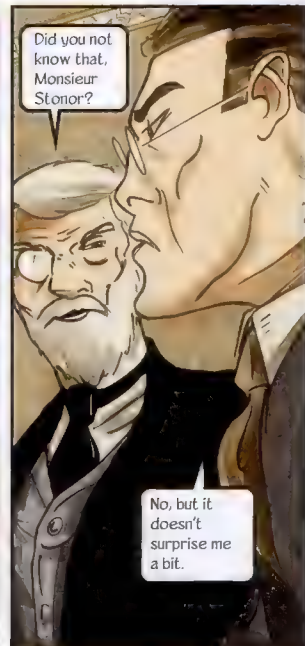
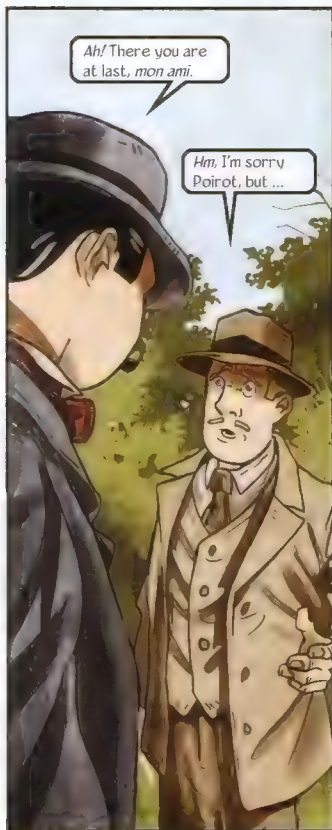








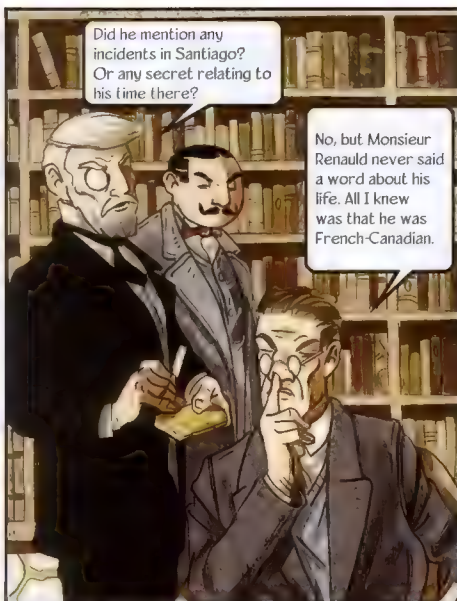






How long were you
Renauld's secretary?

Since he returned from
South America, about
two years ago. A mutual
friend recommended me



Did he mention any
incidents in Santiago?
Or any secret relating to
his time there?

No, but Monsieur
Renauld never said
a word about his
life. All I knew
was that he was
French-Canadian.



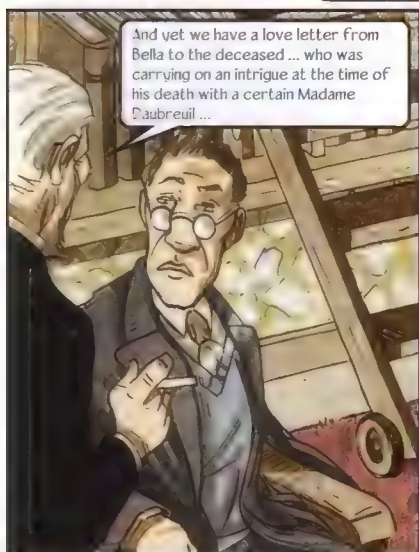
Did Monsieur Renauld
ever mention the
name Duveen?

Er, no ... and yet it
seems familiar.



What about a
woman named
Bella?

Bella? Duveen? Are
you suggesting he had
a mistress? I'll bet my
bottom dollar you're
wrong about that!



And yet we have a love letter from
Bella to the deceased ... who was
carrying on an intrigue at the time of
his death with a certain Madame
Daubreuil ...



You're barking up the wrong tree!
Blackmail, that's what it was! Four
thousand pounds in two months
she extorted from him. Madame
Daubreuil had the screws on him
all right!



Were you aware that Monsieur
Renauld made a new will just two
weeks ago, leaving everything to
his wife?

No. He drew one up a year and
a half ago, in which his wife and
son inherited equally





The subject of the quarrel was Mademoiselle Marthe Daubreuil.

I'll grant you that's true. I love Mademoiselle Daubreuil and I wish to marry her. When I told my father, he flew into a rage. I lost my temper too ...



You were aware of this — attachment, madame?

I feared it. I should prefer Jack to marry an English girl, or at least a French girl whose mother had a better reputation!

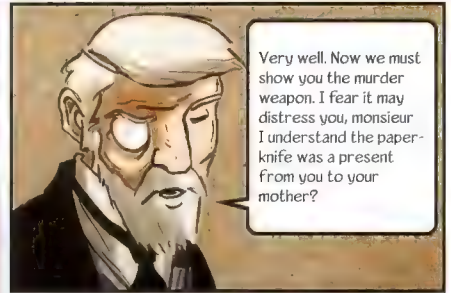


Monsieur Renault, why did you: father object?

He spoke of a shameful mystery surrounding Marthe and her mother. But he refused to discuss the matter further. Finally he reminded me he could take away my allowance at any time.



I left in a fury, in danger of missing my train to Paris. I wrote to Marthe, and her reply reassured me. She was certain my father would give way and let us get married in the end ...



Very well. Now we must show you the murder weapon. I fear it may distress you, monsieur. I understand the paper-knife was a present from you to your mother?



Monsieur le juge! The dagger — it is gone!



LATER ON...

I am glad I was not in your shoes when you had to confess to those gentlemen!

That I had been taken in by a beautiful creature who insisted on seeing the murder weapon? Yes, that was embarrassing. But it was my own fault.



No matter, Hastings. Maybe some good has come of it. In taking advantage of the situation, the murderer blundered!

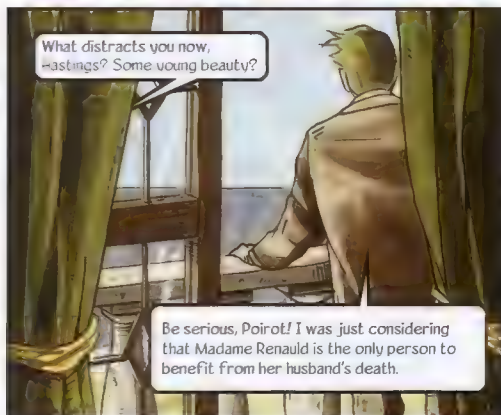


Please accompany me to my room, *mon ami*. There is something I must tell you. But wait one little moment...



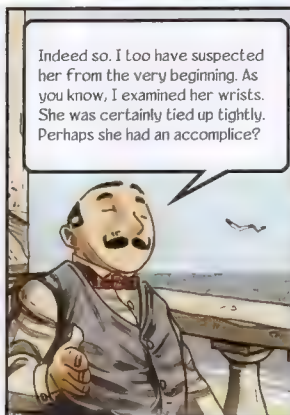
Whose coat is this?

Ah. I see

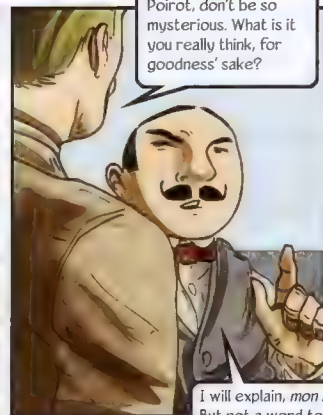


What distracts you now, Hastings? Some young beauty?

Be serious, Poirot! I was just considering that Madame Renauld is the only person to benefit from her husband's death.

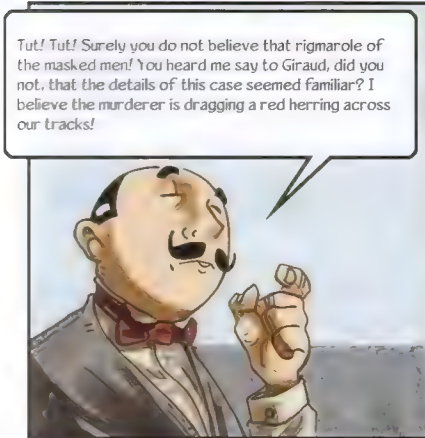
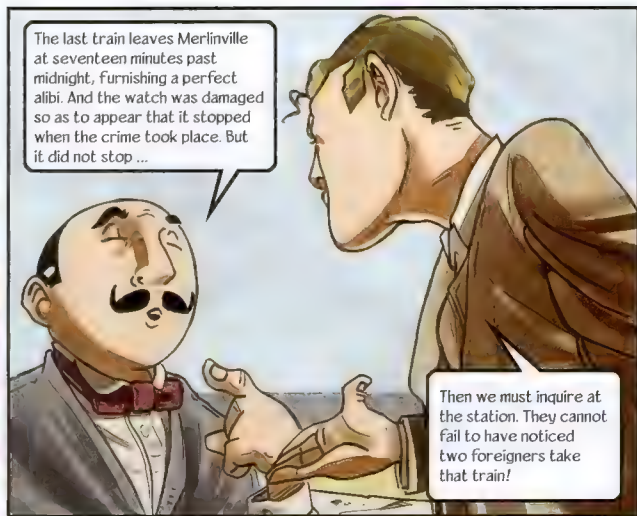


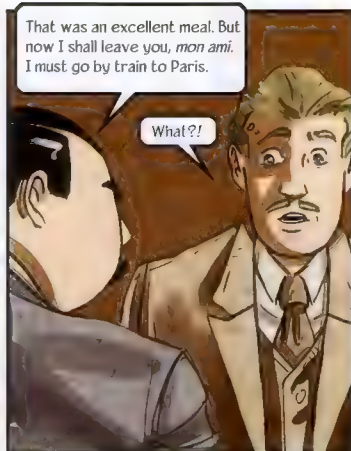
Indeed so. I too have suspected her from the very beginning. As you know, I examined her wrists. She was certainly tied up tightly. Perhaps she had an accomplice?

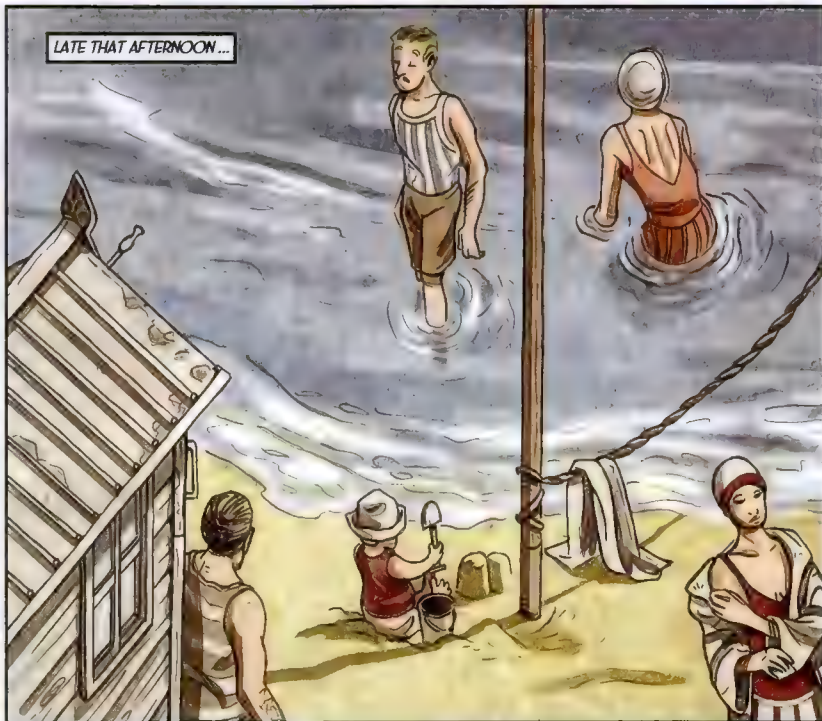
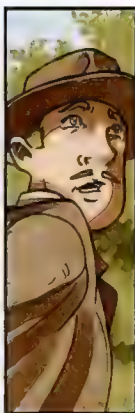


Poirot, don't be so mysterious. What is it you really think, for goodness' sake?

I will explain, *mon ami*. But not a word to Giraud, eh?

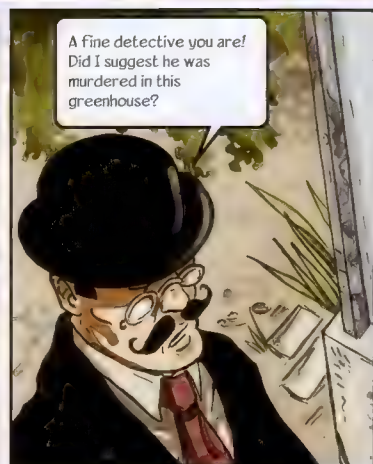
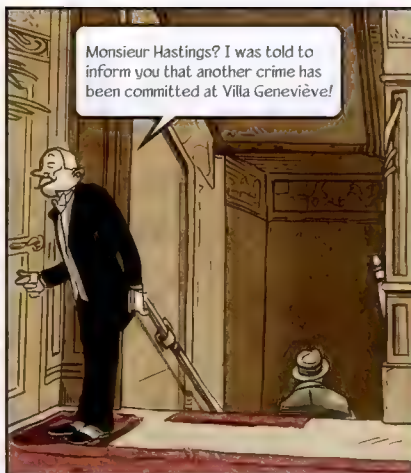








Hello! Who is it?



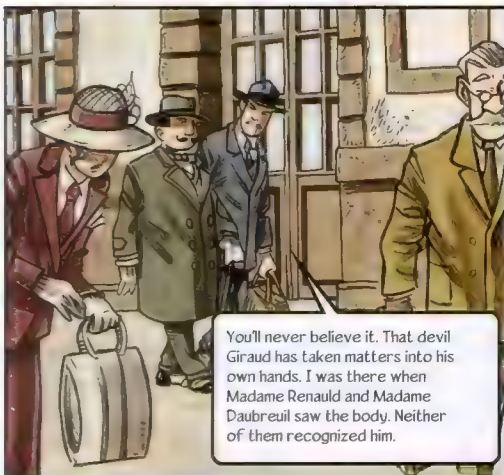
LATER ...



There has been another murder. We must go to Villa Geneviève at once!



Another murder? Ah, then I have everything wrong. Giraud will mock me, and with reason.



You'll never believe it. That devil Giraud has taken matters into his own hands. I was there when Madame Renauld and Madame Daubreuil saw the body. Neither of them recognized him.



But the doctor said something extraordinary — that the man had been dead for at least forty-eight hours.



Mon Dieu! Listen to me, Hastings. The victim was found near where Monsieur Renauld's body was discovered. And — *hmm* — he was stabbed in the chest.

Poirot, you're pulling my leg! How did you know ...



The little grey cells, *mon ami*! Now follow me. We shall take a short cut across the golf course

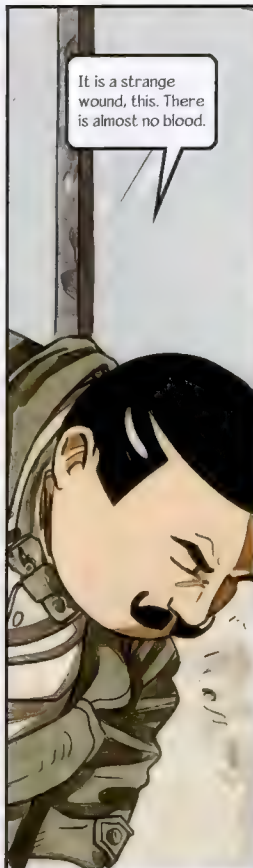


The dagger was still in the wound, you say? You are sure it was the same one?

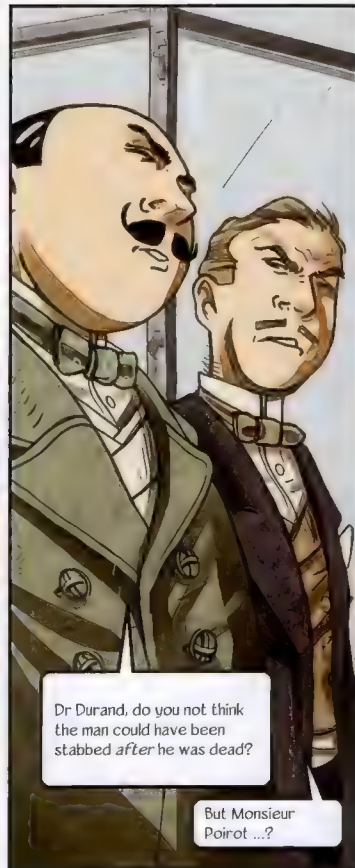
Yes, I'm certain!

Perhaps Jack Renauld had two identical paper-knives made ...

That seems rather unlikely!



It is a strange wound, this. There is almost no blood.



Dr Durand, do you not think the man could have been stabbed after he was dead?

But Monsieur Poirot ...?



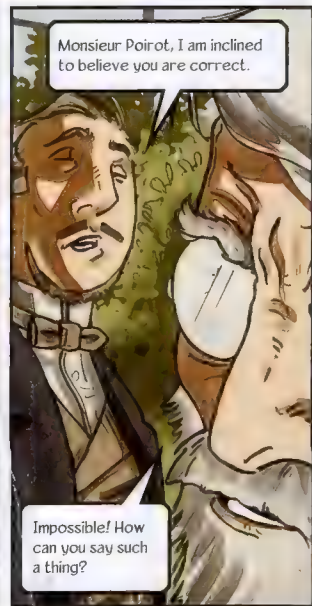
And Monsiuer Giraud agrees with me, do you not, monsieur?

Er... Yes, certainly I agree



What are you saying Poirot? That is impossible. It's absurd!

And I will add that, according to my examination, the man was not killed. Rather he died. Died of an epileptic fit!



Monsieur Poirot, I am inclined to believe you are correct.

Impossible! How can you say such a thing?



You recognize this person, Hastings?

It's Madame Daubreuil!

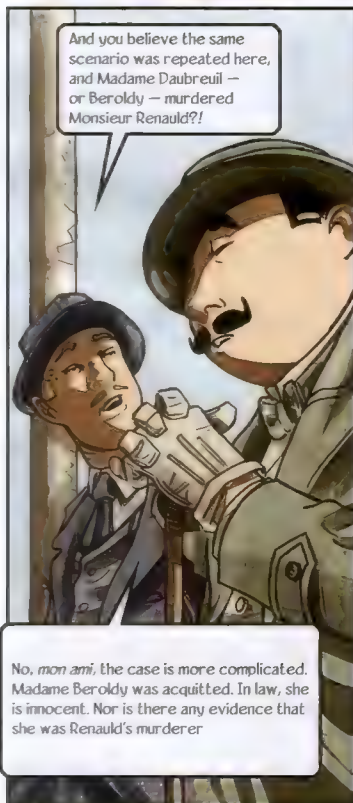


You are mistaken! Do you remember the Beroldy case? This, *mon ami*, is Madame Beroldy.



Madame Beroldy ... the beautiful young wife of a wine merchant, accused of persuading her lover to murder her husband so she could marry the American millionaire who adored her. His name was ... Georges Conneau?

Quite correct! Moved by her tears and her charm, the jury acquitted Madame Beroldy, and she left Paris with her small child and ...



And you believe the same scenario was repeated here, and Madame Daubreuil — or Beroldy — murdered Monsieur Renaud?!

No, *mon ami*, the case is more complicated. Madame Beroldy was acquitted. In law, she is innocent. Nor is there any evidence that she was Renaud's murderer



But you were saving ...

Besides, why would Madame Daubreuil murder Monsieur Renaud? She does not benefit from his death. Let me remind you that Madame Beroldy had an American millionaire waiting to step into her husband's shoes.

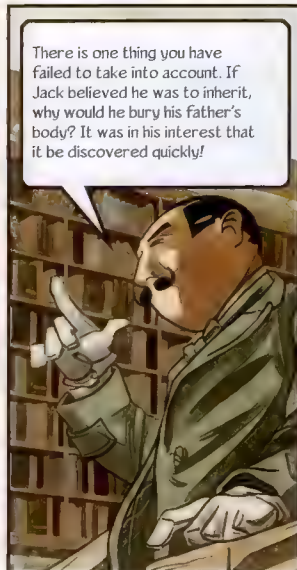
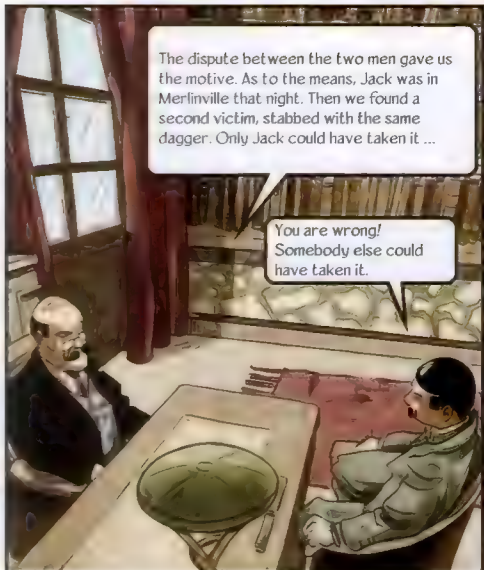


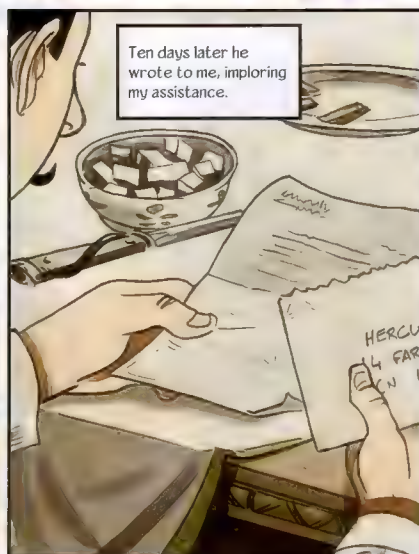
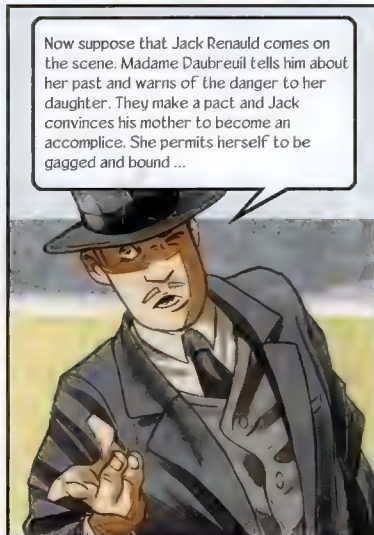
I should like to pay Mademoiselle Daubreuil a visit. Will you accompany me, Hastings?



Pssst! Mademoiselle! May I have a little word with you?

If you wish, Monsieur Poirot.

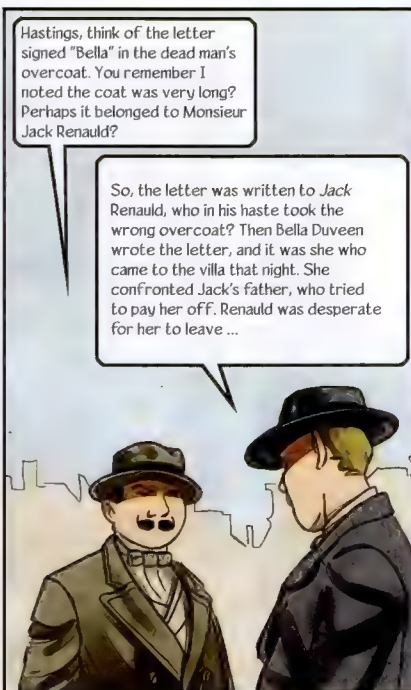






Does that shed new light on the matter, *mon ami*?

You mean Georges Conneau was blackmailing him?



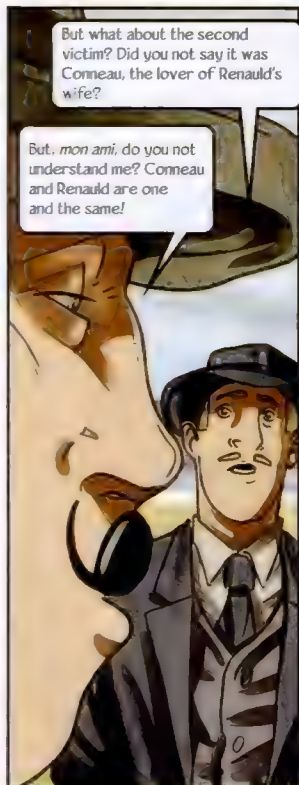
Hastings, think of the letter signed "Bella" in the dead man's overcoat. You remember I noted the coat was very long? Perhaps it belonged to Monsieur Jack Renauld?

So, the letter was written to Jack Renauld, who in his haste took the wrong overcoat? Then Bella Duveen wrote the letter, and it was she who came to the villa that night. She confronted Jack's father, who tried to pay her off. Renauld was desperate for her to leave ...



But why, Poirot?

For one very simple reason. Monsieur Renauld had arranged for a murder to take place that night.



But what about the second victim? Did you not say it was Conneau, the lover of Renauld's wife?

But, *mon ami*, do you not understand me? Conneau and Renauld are one and the same!



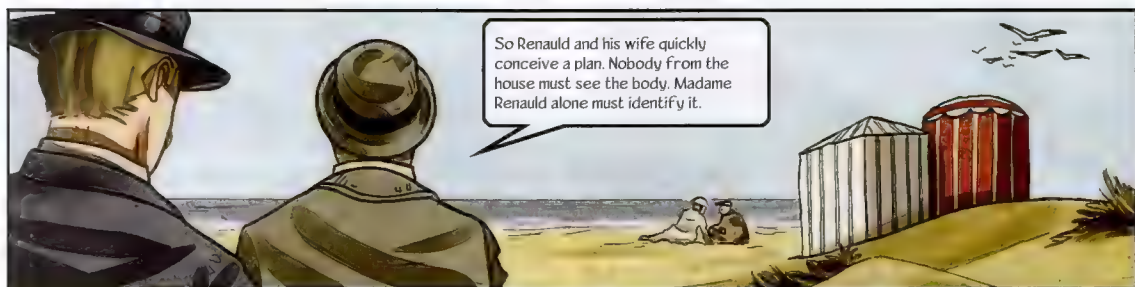
We know how dearly Madame Renauld loved her husband. Now, did Madame Dubreuil not blackmail Renauld? And is it not a fact that we know nothing of Renauld's past? He could not allow his son to marry the daughter of his former accomplice. There was only one way out.

He planned his own death?



Yes, Hastings. But he did not intend to die. He would flee to another country, to be joined in time by his wife. All they needed was a body to substitute for him ...

And fortuitously, a vagabond comes into the garden one day. He and Renauld fight, the tramp suffers an epileptic fit, and dies!

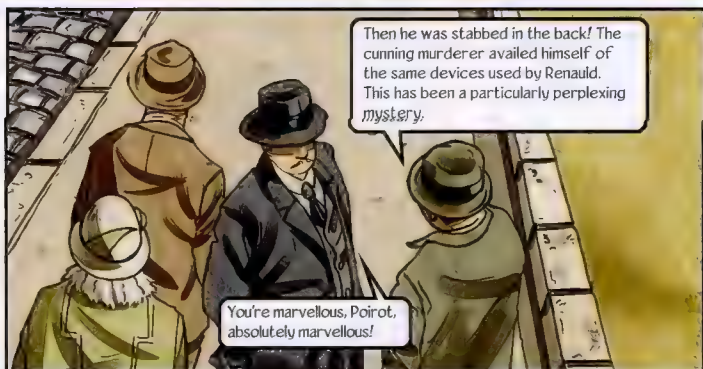


So Renault and his wife quickly conceive a plan. Nobody from the house must see the body. Madame Renault alone must identify it.



Renault sent me a letter asking for help, in order to impress the magistrate. The paper-knife was used a murder weapon, to give Madame Renault's story credence. She was bound and gagged by her husband, who left through the window, smoothing his footprints as he left. He went to the golf course and, having used a lead pipe to disfigure the victim's face, began to dig a grave ...

And then?



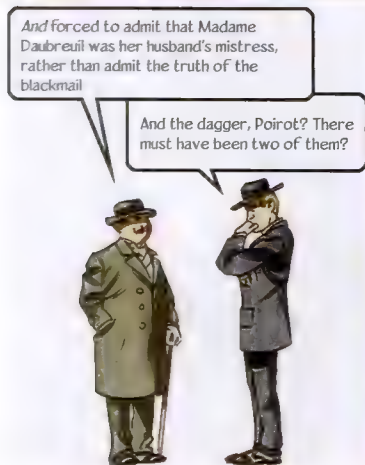
Then he was stabbed in the back! The cunning murderer availed himself of the same devices used by Renault. This has been a particularly perplexing mystery.

You're marvellous, Poirot, absolutely marvellous!



Whereas Giraud found one clue and followed the wrong trail! No method, Hastings!

Poor Madame Renault. To find that it was her husband who had been murdered. And then to find her son accused ...



And forced to admit that Madame Daubreuil was her husband's mistress, rather than admit the truth of the blackmail

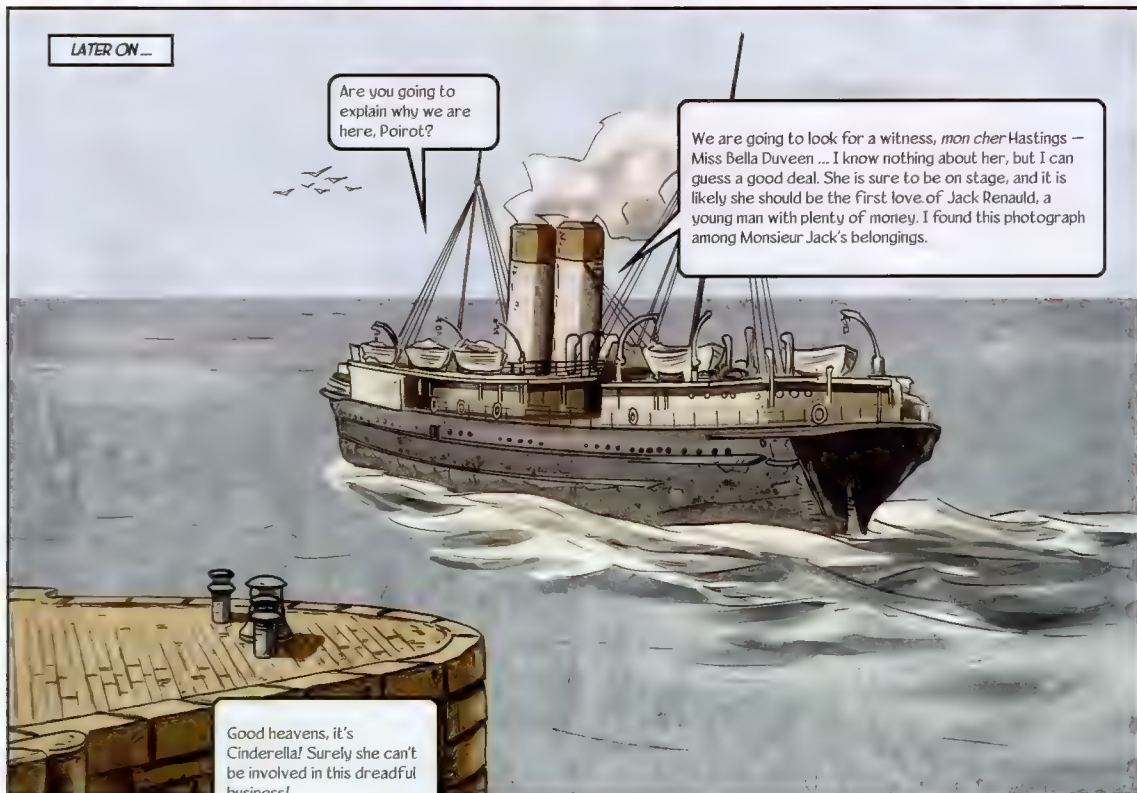
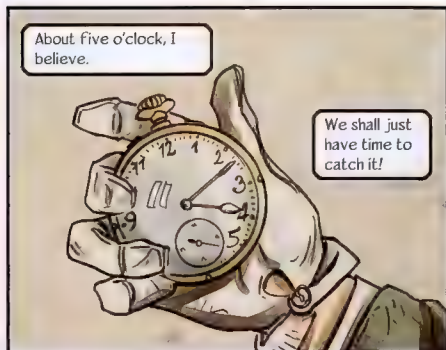
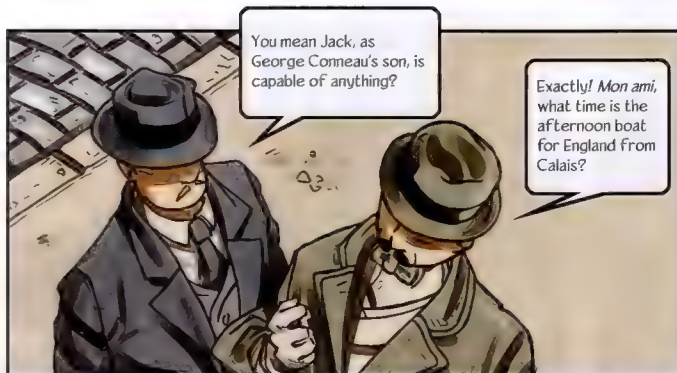
And the dagger, Poirot? There must have been two of them?

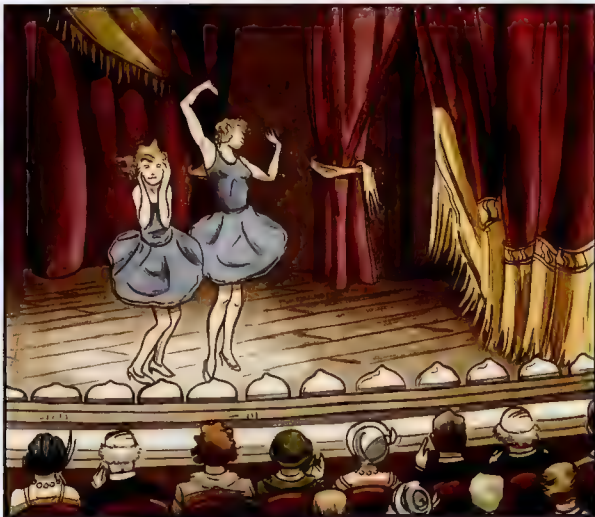
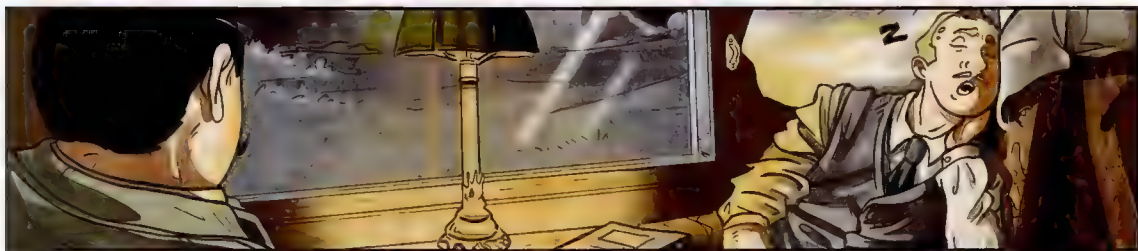
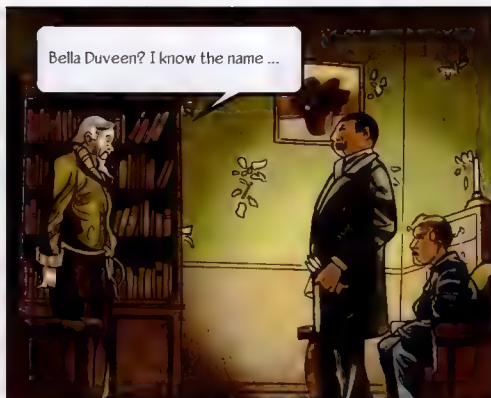


Certainly! They were duplicates, and one belongs to Jack. But far more significant is the question of Jack's heredity. As the saying has it ...



Like father, like son!

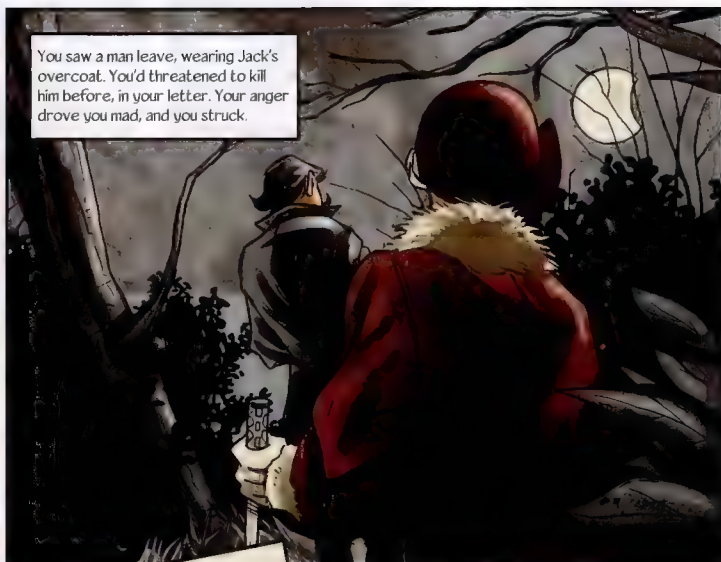








You came to see Mr Renault that night. He tried to give you money, but you refused it. You left, but waited outside ...



You saw a man leave, wearing Jack's overcoat. You'd threatened to kill him before, in your letter. Your anger drove you mad, and you struck.



You're right, you're right! And you still love me?

I cannot help myself Cinderella. Love has been too strong for me.



Oh, no!
No!

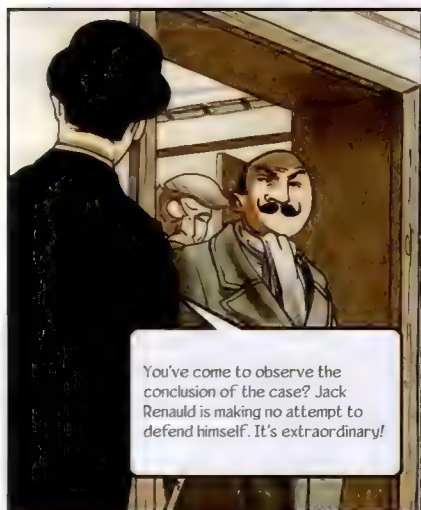
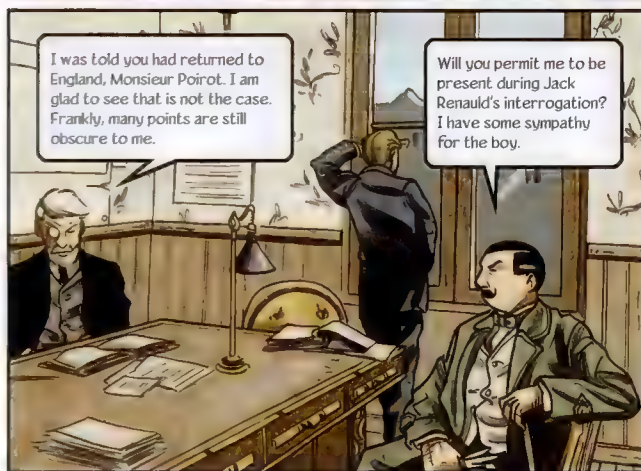


Hastings. Let her go. I shall not pursue her.



Love has changed you, Hastings. Why did you not tell me you knew this girl?

Poirot, I'm sorry. But sometimes one has no choice. And I'm certain Miss Duveen was not involved in the crime. I travelled home from France with her that day, and I would swear to that in a court of law!

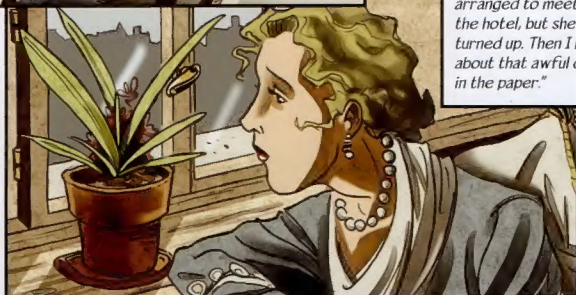






"My dear Hastings — By the time you read this letter Bella will have given herself up. I'm tired out with struggling. However, I owe you an explanation ..."

"Bella was so in love with Jack! She got it into her head that he was keen on another girl and she made up her mind to go to Merlinville and try to see him. I tried everything to stop her from going."



"The next day Bella had arranged to meet me in the hotel, but she never turned up. Then I read about that awful crime in the paper."



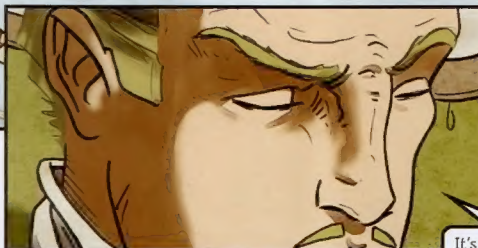
"I decided to go to the villa, where I ran up against you. Then I saw the dead man ..."



"There was only one thing for me to do: get hold of the dagger and escape with it. I pretended to faint ..."



"I took the train for Calais and then the boat to England. When we were in mid-Channel I threw the dagger into the sea."



"Bella was already in London, looking like nothing on earth. I told her what I'd done and she began laughing ... it was horrible. But we had to continue our tour. And then I saw you in Coventry that night ... That's all I can say."

It's signed "~~Cinder~~ — Dulcie Duveen".

